

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1106

By Cooper

A RESOLUTION to recognize Jimmie Mae Cotton-Leach, Fourth Annual Living Legend Awards honoree.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should specially recognize those estimable individuals who have dedicated their time and energies toward enhancing the quality of life in their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Jimmie Mae Cotton-Leach, who is being honored at the Fourth Annual Living Legend Awards in recognition of the leadership and service she has provided to the people of Shelby County; and

WHEREAS, owner and operator of Girlee's in Memphis, Ms. Cotton-Leach has successfully run a host of restaurants, including Melanie's Fine Food and Leach Family Restaurant; and

WHEREAS, the eldest daughter of Walter Leonard and Girlee Smith, Ms. Cotton-Leach fell in love with the art of cooking at the age of twelve; she began her career as a restaurateur after successfully baking and selling \$10,000 worth of cakes to help her eldest son raise money to fulfill God's calling for his life; and

WHEREAS, with a dream of a bakery in which to bake more cakes and a \$1,000 credit card loan, Ms. Cotton-Leach started her first family restaurant, Melanie's Fine Foods, on North Watkins Street in Memphis; eight years later in 1993, she opened her second restaurant, Leach Family Restaurant, to alleviate the load at Melanie's due to its overwhelming success; and

WHEREAS, both Melanie's and Leach Family Restaurant served world-renowned entertainers, actors, singers, and politicians; the restaurant walls were adorned with autographed photos of those celebrity patrons; and

WHEREAS, known affectionately as Momma Leach, Ms. Cotton-Leach presently cooks and serves at her third family-owned and operated restaurant, Girlee's; Girlee's, named in honor of her beloved mother, Girlee Smith, opened in December 2014 and employs all of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the service she provides at her restaurant, Ms. Cotton-Leach serves as church mother at True Gospel Church, where her eldest son, Aaron, serves as pastor; she always seeks to help those in need and desires to open a homeless shelter; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Cotton-Leach shared love and companionship with her husband, Baxter Richard Leach, one of the original 1968 sanitation strikers in Memphis, until the time of his passing in 2019; seven children were born from their union; and

WHEREAS, throughout her estimable career, Jimmie Mae Cotton-Leach has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity; her commitment to excellence and community service is representative of the Volunteer State, and she should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we congratulate Jimmie Mae Cotton-Leach upon her recognition at the Fourth Annual Living Legend Awards, applaud her outstanding community leadership, salute her professional expertise and personal excellence, and extend our best wishes for continued success in her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.